

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

**DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln**

---

Faculty Publications, UNL Libraries

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

---

July 1999

## The “Lost” U.S. Technical Reports: Obtaining Reports from the 1940s and ‘50s

Robert L. Bolin

*University of Nebraska--Lincoln*, [rbolin2@unl.edu](mailto:rbolin2@unl.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/librarianscience>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

Bolin, Robert L., "The “Lost” U.S. Technical Reports: Obtaining Reports from the 1940s and ‘50s" (1999).  
*Faculty Publications, UNL Libraries*. 158.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/librarianscience/158>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications, UNL Libraries by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# The “Lost” U.S. Technical Reports: Obtaining Reports from the 1940s and ‘50s

Robert L. Bolin

Library, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844-2361, USA

Robert Bolin is Electronic Resources Librarian at the University of Idaho Library with the rank of Associate Professor. In addition to reference work and bibliographic instruction, Bolin manages the library's extensive CD-ROM collection. His research interests include the history of U.S. Army technical intelligence and scholarly applications of hypertext. He received an MLS degree from the University of Kentucky in 1981 and an MPA degree from the University of Georgia in 1983.

## Abstract

Although centralized distribution of U.S. government technical reports began in 1946, the reports distributed by predecessors of the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) for the first 15 years are now effectively “lost.” They are not available from NTIS, and they are not listed in the NTIS bibliographic database. Those reports are available from the Photoduplication Service of the Library of Congress, and many are available from other sources as well. This article describes bibliographic tools and resources available to identify those reports and provides advice on how to obtain them at a reasonable price.

**Keywords:** Technical report literature, National Technical Information Service, Library of Congress, Technical Report Number Series

## Introduction

U.S. technical reports issued between 1946 and 1961 are effectively “lost” because they are not available from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). This article describes the bibliographic tools and resources available to identify them and provides advice on how to obtain them inexpensively.

## History

In June 1945, President Harry Truman issued an executive order “Providing for the Release of Scientific Information.” This was a decisive event in the history of federal government technical report literature [1]. That order set in motion events that led eventually to the centralized collection and distribution of federal government reports by NTIS and to bibliographic control of reports held by NTIS through *Government Reports Announcements and Index*.

As a result of the massive research and development effort during World War II, government agencies and their contractors had created thousands of reports. Truman's executive order provided for the release of wartime, government-funded scientific and technical reports to the

public and particularly to industry. The order also set up a cabinet-level committee called the Publication Board to manage the effort. In August 1945, Truman issued a second order authorizing the Board to release "scientific and industrial information obtained from the enemy" [2].

The Office of the Publication Board, established within the Department of Commerce, collected and distributed the reports. In 1946, the Office of the Publication Board and several other agencies were consolidated into the Office of Technical Services in the Department of Commerce [3]. The Office of the Publication Board and the Office of Technical Services were predecessors of the National Technical Information Service [4].

In the first few years, the Office of the Publication Board and the Office of Technical Services released a wide variety of documents. The reports included evaluations of enemy weapons and equipment, foreign documents, translations, evaluations of enemy industries and technologies, foreign patents, intelligence reports, U.S. military manuals, administrative reports, historical studies, and research reports.

The Office of the Publication Board announced the reports available in the *Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports (BSIR)*. The first issue of the *BSIR* was published on January 11, 1946. In 1949, the title was changed to *Bibliography of Technical Reports* and, in 1955, to *U.S. Government Research Reports* [5]. After additional name changes this publication became known as *Government Reports Announcements and Index*.

Reports received by the Office of the Publication Board and later the Office of Technical Services were assigned unique "PB" numbers. The PB numbers, which were included in the citations in the *BSIR*, were to be used when ordering reports.

Many of those early technical reports were available on microfilm. The June 18, 1948, issue of *BSIR* announced that, effective immediately, "all orders for reports in microfilm or photostat type of reproduction" were to be sent to the Photoduplication Service of the Library of Congress rather than to the Office of Technical Services [6]. Later, all reports through PB 160,000 were turned over the Photoduplication Service along with responsibility for making them available to the public [7].

From the perspective of the public, the present-day NTIS in the Department of Commerce is a catalog sales organization. It sells reports listed in *Government Reports Announcements and Index* to the general public. Sales clerks at NTIS use the NTIS bibliographic database when filling orders. Reports still available from NTIS are listed in the database, but the reports that were turned over to the Library of Congress are not [8]. Not surprisingly, a customer who asks for a report not listed in the NTIS database will probably be told that the report does not exist.

### Identifying Specific Reports

The citations listed in the *Bibliography of Scientific and Technical Reports* were grouped under broad classifications such as "ELECTRONICS, GERMAN," and subject indexes were provided for the early issues. Identifying reports on a particular subject is fairly simple. However, finding the citation to a specific report identified by the PB number or the report number assigned by the issuing agency could be difficult. Fortunately, the Special Libraries Association recognized that problem and prepared a couple of very useful numerical indexes. A number of narrowly focused numerical indexes have also been prepared.

### *PB-Number Indexes*

PB numbers are critically important to locating and acquiring these reports. In 1949, the Special Libraries Association produced the *Numerical Index to the Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports*, which covers the first 10 volumes of the *BSIR*—1946 through 1948 [9]. The index identifies for the user the *BSIR* volume and page number where the citation corresponding to each PB number is located. In addition to the PB number index, the *Numerical Index* also contains tables correlating several major series of report numbers with PB numbers. In 1949 the Office of Technical Services took over producing a PB number index. The *Numerical Index Supplement to the Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports* was issued in segments covering volumes 11–19 [10].

Beginning with the issue covering volume 20, numbers 1–6, July to December 1953, the *Index to the Bibliography of Technical Reports* included numerical indexes matching PB numbers to citations in the *Bibliography*. Since 1953, PB number indexes have been a standard part of the indexes to all the predecessors of *Government Reports Announcements and Index*.

### *Report Number Index*

Correlating the report numbers assigned by issuing agencies with PB numbers is important because reports being sought are often referred to by report numbers. In 1953, the Special Libraries Association published the *Correlation Index, Document Series and PB Reports*, which correlates report numbers in hundreds of series with the corresponding PB numbers [11]. Of course, the user must also have the *Numerical Index* to find the citations corresponding to the PB numbers.

### *Specialized Report Number Indexes*

Specialized indexes have been prepared for several series of technical reports and Army manuals, which were listed in *BSIR* in the late 1940s. Table 1 matches the report series with the specialized bibliographies in which they are listed.

### *Indexes for BDDA and MDDC Numbered Reports*

Declassified reports from the British and American atomic bomb projects were released through the Office of Technical Services. BDDA stands for British Declassified Documents, Atomic. MDDC report numbers were assigned to reports issued by the Manhattan Engineering District, the American wartime atomic bomb-building project. MDDC stands for Manhattan District Declassified Code. The publication, *American and British Atomic Energy Reports*, correlates both BDDA and MDDC report numbers with PB numbers [12]. The *Numerical Index to the Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports* also contains a table correlating MDDC report numbers with PB numbers [13].

### *BIOS, CIOS, FD, or FIAT Report Number Indexes*

Organizations that investigated German and Japanese industry and technology prepared a large number of technical reports after World War II. The most important report number series used were BIOS for the British Intelligence Objectives Subcommittee, CIOS for the

**Table 1.** Report series listed in specialized indexes

Stands for		Index
British Declassified Documents, Atomic	American and British Atomic Energy Reports, 1948	C 35.2:At 7
British Intelligence Objectives Subcommittee	Classified List of OTS Printed Reports, 1947	C 35.2:R29
Combined Intelligence Objectives Subcommittee	Classified List of OTS Printed Reports, 1947	C 35.2:R29
Foreign Intelligence Agency, Technical	FIAT Reports, 1947	C 35.2:G31/2
Field Manual	Army Manuals Listed in BSIR, 1998	<a href="http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc_no.html">http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc_no.html</a>
Manhattan District Declassified Code	American and British Atomic Energy Reports, 1948	C 35.2:At 7
Office of Scientific Research and Development	OSRD Reports, 1947	C 35.2:Sci:2
Pamphlet	Army Manuals Listed in BSIR, 1998	<a href="http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc_no.html">http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc_no.html</a>
Supply Bulletin	Army Manuals Listed in BSIR, 1998	<a href="http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc_no.html">http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc_no.html</a>
Technical Bulletin	Army Manuals Listed in BSIR, 1998	<a href="http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc_no.html">http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc_no.html</a>
Technical Manual	Army Manuals Listed in BSIR, 1998	<a href="http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc.jio.html">http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc.jio.html</a>

Combined Intelligence Objectives Subcommittee, and FIAT for the Foreign Intelligence Agency, Technical [14]. A number of documents were also issued under FD, “Foreign Document,” numbers.

The *Classified List of O[ffice of] T[echnical ] S[ervices] Printed Reports* correlates BIOS, CIOS, FIAT, and several other report number series with PB numbers [15]. *FIAT Reports* matches FIAT report numbers with PB numbers [16]. The *Numerical Index to the Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports* also correlates reports in all four series to the corresponding PB numbers [17].

### *Indexes to OSRD Number Reports*

During World War II, the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) mobilized scientists and engineers for a large number of vital research projects [18]. OSRD report numbers were assigned to reports created by OSRD sponsored projects. *OSRD Reports, Bibliography and Index of Declassified Reports having OSRD Numbers* also correlates OSRD report numbers with the corresponding PB numbers and with the volume and page numbers in the *Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports* where the descriptions of the documents can be found [19]. *OSRD Reports* also contains a cross-reference list in PB number order and an author and subject index. The *Numerical Index to the Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports* also contains a table correlating OSRD report numbers with PB numbers [20].

### *Index to Army Manuals Released through OTS*

More than 2,000 U.S. Army manuals were released through the Office of Technical Services in the late 1940s. Those manuals include large numbers of field manuals, technical manuals, and technical bulletins and small numbers of pamphlets and supply bulletins. An online bibliography of *Army Manuals Listed in Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports, 1946-49*, matches manual numbers with the corresponding PB numbers and with the volume and page number where the citations to the manuals can be found in *BSIR* [21].

## **Getting Assistance from The Library of Congress**

Most individuals seeking these reports do not have knowledge of or ready access to the *Numerical Index*, the *Correlation Index*, and the other indexes discussed above. Fortunately, the technical reports staff in the Library of Congress’ Science, Technology and Business Division will provide assistance in identifying bibliographic and location information concerning technical reports from the 1940s and 1950s. The technical reports staff can be reached at (202) 707-5655 or fax (202) 707-0253.

## **How to Obtain the “Lost” Technical Reports**

Reports numbered PB 1 through PB 160,000 are available from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service. However, copies made by the Library of Congress are expensive. For example, *FIAT Reports*, PB 86,000, mentioned above, is 94 pages long. If ordered from the Photoduplication Service, that document would cost \$45. Many of the reports are available elsewhere. Below are some alternatives to ordering from the Library of Congress.

### *Interlibrary Loan*

Thousands of copies of early technical reports were distributed in hard copy, and some were published commercially. The British and American reports on the exploitation of German industry and technology were also distributed by His Majesty's Stationery Office in Great Britain. Many of those early technical reports were added to general library collections and cataloged. An author or title search of a large bibliographic database, like WorldCat, may turn up any given report.

### *Government Document Collections*

Depending on local practices, technical reports may have found their way into local government document collections. Some, like military manuals, were also distributed through the depository document program. Apparently, a number of the very earliest PB-numbered reports were also distributed to Federal Depository Libraries. Later the FIAT, CIOS, and BIOS reports on German industry and technology were distributed to more than 100 college, public, and state libraries. Those libraries are listed in the April 4, 1947, issue of the *BSIR* [22].

In some instances, the location of U.S. technical reports in a government documents collection is easy to determine. If they are present in a government documents collection, the earliest PB-numbered reports will probably be filed under the Superintendent of Documents number assigned to Publication Board documents, Y 3.P 96/6:7/[nos]. Similarly, the FIAT reports were assigned Superintendent of Documents number W 1.72/6:[nos], grouping them with other material from the Military Government for Germany. The physical location of collections of other materials, such as the British BIOS reports, varies from library to library, depending on decisions made by librarians working in the 1940s and 1950s.

### *Federal Technical Reports Depository Libraries*

In the late 1950s, a number of depository libraries for U.S. federal government technical reports were established [23]. Those libraries were provided with copies of all reports then still available at the Office of Technical Services. Although the reports depository program was discontinued in the 1960s, those depository libraries may have fairly complete collections of reports issued in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s. The libraries participating in the depository program were:

John Crerar Library in Chicago  
University of Cincinnati Library  
Detroit Public Library  
Georgia Institute of Technology Library  
Linda Hall Library in Kansas City  
New York Public Library  
Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh

### *The National Technical Information Service*

Although these early postwar reports are not listed in the NTIS bibliographic database, a small number of the reports transferred to the Library of Congress are still available from NTIS. NTIS has very spotty holdings of reports with numbers in the range PB 153,000 through



PB 160,000 [24]. If a customer insists, NTIS will consult their manual files. The chances of success are slim, but if NTIS owns a particular report, a copy will be far less expensive than if it were obtained from the Library of Congress.

### Ordering PB Reports from The Library of Congress

To order a report from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, the report being ordered must be identified by its PB number. To confirm the PB number, number of pages, and other bibliographic information, call the Special Services section of the Photoduplication Service at (202) 707-5661.

To order a PB report from the Photoduplication Service, fax the request to (202) 707-1771, or mail the order to: Library of Congress, Photoduplication Service, Washington, DC 20540. The PB number and all other available bibliographic information, such as the title, date, and issuing agency, should be included in the order.

Payment is required at the time the order is placed. For credit card orders, include a credit card number along with the name as it appears on the card, the expiration date, and any other information needed to make a purchase. The Library of Congress only accepts MasterCard and Visa.

A \$10 search fee is charged for each report ordered. The search fee covers the cost of copying the first 25 pages of the report. If the report is more than 25 pages long, 50¢ is charged for each additional page. For further information contact the Photoduplication Service at (202) 707-5640 or fax (202) 707-1771.

### Conclusion

The centralized distribution of United States government technical reports, which began in 1946, has made the vast collection of reports created by the federal government and its contractors available to the public, industry and scholars. An organization, initially called the Office of the Publication Board and later the Office of Technical Services, was established in the Department of Commerce to publish bibliographic information about the reports available and to distribute them on demand.

Now, however, reports issued before 1961 are not available from the National Technical Information Service, the successor to the Office of the Publication Board and the Office of Technical Services, and they are not listed in the bibliographic database NTIS uses when filling orders.

Those early technical reports are available from the Photoduplication Service of the Library of Congress and many are available from other sources as well. There are a number of indexes that allow users to identify reports on a specific subject or to find the citations for specific reports identified by report number or by PB number. Also, the Science, Technology, and Business Division of the Library of Congress will provide assistance in identifying those early reports. Although it is sometimes difficult to identify and locate the “lost” technical reports, an individual with persistence and imagination can find them.

### Notes

1. U.S. President, “Providing for the Release of Scientific Information” (Executive Order 9568, June 8, 1945), *Code of Federal Regulations, Title 3, The President, 1943–1948 Compilation*.
2. U.S. President, “Providing for the Release of Scientific Information (Extension and Amendment of Executive Order No. 9568)” (Executive Order 9604, August 25, 1945), *Code of Federal Regulations, Title 3, The President, 1943–1948 Compilation*.



3. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Report of the Secretary of Commerce, 1946* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), xxvii (SuDoc: C 1.1:1945-46).
4. The effort to disseminate reports by the Publication Board and the Office of Technical Services is described by Nancy Boylan in "A History of the Dissemination of PB Reports," *Journal of Library History* 3 (April 1968):156-162.
5. The *Bibliography* and its successors were distributed under these Superintendent of Documents numbers Y 3.P 96/6:9, C 35.7, and C 41.21. They are also available from University Microfilms International as "Government Reports Announcements," Catalog Number 1453. Fourteen reels of 35mm microfilm cover the period January 1946 through December 1963.
6. U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Technical Services, *Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports* 9 (18 June 1948), back of front cover.
7. John J. Elsbree, Production Development Specialist, NTIS. Letter to author, 3 August 1993.
8. Elsbree, 1993.
9. Special Libraries Association, *Numerical Index to the Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports, Volumes 1-10, 1946-1948*. (New York: Special Libraries Association, 1949). (Available from University Microfilms International, PB2-OP04032.)
10. U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Technical Services, *Numerical Index Supplement to Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports* (Washington, DC: Office of Technical Services, 1954) (SuDoc: C 35.7/3:11-19). The volume is also available from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, PB 98050 S through PB 98050 S9.
11. Gretchen E. Runge, ed. *Correlation Index, Document Series and PB Reports*. (New York: Special Libraries Association, 1953). (Available from University Microfilm International, PB2-OP60884.)
12. O. Willard Holloway, comp. *American and British Atomic Energy Reports* (Washington, DC: Office of Technical Services, February 1948) (SuDoc: C 35.2:At 7). Also available from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, PB 87782 and O. Willard Holloway, comp., *American and British Atomic Energy Reports, Supplement to PB 87782*. (Washington, DC: Office of Technical Services, September 1948). (Available from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, PB 87782-S.)
13. *Numerical Index* (1949), 483.
14. A good brief description of the allied efforts to exploit German industry and technology is found in the section entitled "The Spoils" in Earl F. Ziemke's history of *The US Army in the Occupation of Germany, 1944-1946*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 314-317. (SuDoc: D 114.2:G 31). A more detailed description is found in John Gimbel, *Science, Technology, and Reparations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).
15. O. Willard Holloway and Oliver B. Isaac, comps., *Classified List of OTS Printed Reports: A List of Reports on German and Japanese Technology* (Washington, DC: Office of Technical Services, October 1947) (SuDoc: C 35.2:R 29). Also available from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, PB 81500.
16. Arlene Blackburn *et al.*, comps., *FIAT Reports: Bibliography and Index of Reports Resulting from American Investigations of German Industry* (Washington, DC: Office of Technical Services, January 1948) (SuDoc: C 35.2:G 31/2). Also available from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, PB 86000.
17. *Numerical Index* (1949), 459-482.
18. The work of the Office of Scientific Research and Development is described in detail in a series entitled "Science in World War II" published by Little, Brown and Company of Boston in the late 1940s:  
 Edwin Cowles Andrus, ed., *Advances in Military Medicine* (1948).  
 James Phinney Baxter, *Scientists Against Time* (1946).  
 Joseph Cannon Boyce, *New Weapons for Air Warfare* (1947).  
 John Ely Bruchard, *Rockets, Guns, and Targets* (1948).  
 W. Albert Noyes, *Chemistry* (1948).  
 Irvin Stewart, *Organizing Scientific Research for War* (1948).  
 Chauncey Suits *et al.*, eds., *Applied Physics* (1948).  
 Lincoln Reuber Theismeyer, *Combat Scientists* (1947).
19. W. Kenneth Lowry, ed., *OSRC Reports, Bibliography and Index of Declassified Reports having OSRD Numbers* (Washington, DC: Office of Technical Services, June 1947). (SuDoc: C 35.2: Sci 2). Also available from the Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, PB 78000.
20. *Numerical Index* (1949), 486.
21. Robert L. Bolin, *Army Manuals Listed in Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports, 1946-49* [Online], (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Library, 1998) (<http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/bsir/doc/jio.html>).
22. *Bibliography of Scientific and Industrial Reports* 5 (4 April 1947), back of title page.
23. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Report of the Secretary of Commerce, 1957* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957): 72 (SuDoc: C 1.1:1957) and U.S. Department of Commerce, *Report of the Secretary of Commerce, 1958* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958): 65 (SuDoc: C 1.1:1958).
24. Elsbree, 1993.